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Emplaced Partnerships and the Ethics of Care, Recognition and Resilience

Dr Annmarie Ryan, Dr Oana Branzei, Prof Susi Geiger, and Dr Helen Haugh

Synopsis

This paper provides a synopsis of an editorial essay introducing a special issue on the role of place in cross-sector partnering (CSP), featured in the Journal of Business Ethics. The introductory essay served three goals. One, introducing the papers and authors that follow in the issue. Two, to share a novel conceptualisation of partnerships and place developed by the editorial team. Three, share insights from 4 key domains of place research from distinguished authors who as discussants, responded to the special issue and its goals. This synopsis will work to share the key insights across all three aspects, with emphasis on the novel conceptualisation of partnerships and place which identifies three place-specific ethics — ethics of recognition, ethics of care and ethics of resilience and their role in cross sector partnering.

Introduction and Background

Inspired by the works of Cresswell and others, the SI delves into the multifaceted roles of place in addressing societal challenges. We explore how places, from towns to ecosystems, serve as crucibles where sustainability issues materialise, affecting daily lives. Through diverse lenses, we consider how cross-sector partnerships emerge and evolve within the moral and material contexts of specific locales. By focusing on partnership dynamics within various ecosystems, from walking 'on Country' to urban areas, we illuminate the intricate interplay between actors and places. Our aim is to elucidate how partnerships engage with and reshape their environments, offering insights into the complexities of sustainability initiatives. Emphasising the ethics and dynamics of place, the SI fosters cross-pollination between place theory and partnership research, and encourages innovative approaches to understanding the interconnections between organisations and their surroundings. By amplifying marginalised voices and embracing indigenous perspectives, the papers develop place-sensitive theories that transcend traditional contextual analyses, shedding light on the performative nature of places in shaping partnership feasibility and desirability.

The SI expressly moves away from a reductionist view that considers place as a geographical context, container, or mere backdrop, and instead recognises place as an active ingredient (Finnegan, 2008), an actor (Gieryn, 2000), in the making and shaping of CSPs. The socio-materiality of place affords action, frames identity work and shapes CSPs as communities come together to care for places. Whereas prior research has investigated CSPs and their systemic impact on grand challenges, the papers in this SI focus on the local dynamics that shape CSPs within a community, between communities, in a region, and between countries. In all these settings, our attention is drawn to the situational rather than the universal, and to the actors and issues that convene in places and in which CSPs are established, emerge (or fail to emerge), develop, sustain, and, in some cases, conclude.

Issues and Questions Considered

The papers included in this special issue reveal core tensions and render visible the acts by which partners interact with places, identified along the ethics of recognition, ethics of care and ethics of resilience. We define the **ethics of recognition** as being concerned with how actors in and of places make efforts to be recognised as equal partners; they do so using place-based resources and in turn use this recognition to draw attention to place-based concerns. It highlights how recognition is crucial for collective action and social justice, affecting who participates and who remains marginalised. Recognition extends to accepting actors' issues and identities, shaping their roles as representatives of a place. This ethics underscores the interplay between place and identity, where environments both constrain

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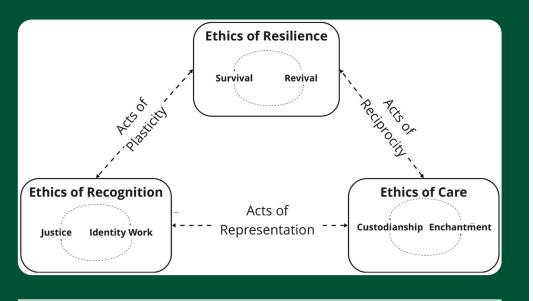University College Dublin
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and enable identity formation. The papers in the SI illuminate how actors navigate recognition to address common issues, emphasising the importance of representation in acknowledging place-based injustices.

The ethics of care is concerned with the mundane acts of reciprocity that bind partners and places. It allows an opening into the many different practices through which partnerships care for and about places, maintaining and repairing them. An ethics of care draws attention to the mundane acts of reciprocity that bind partners and places, including those that are vital to maintain and repair places. We base our reflections here on the classic definition of care as "everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair 'our world' so that we can live in it as well as possible" (Fisher & Tronto, 1990, p. 40) where care is interwoven "in a complex life-sustaining web" (ibid.) that includes social, material, and affective worlds. Place-based partnerships are, by definition, hyper-local and created to care; established to work in a specific geographic area or community (Moore et al., 2007), mandated to work for place (George & Reed, 2017), and embedded in the locale to identify, anticipate, and respond to local issues and opportunities (Muir, 2021). An ethics of care approach emphasises this co-dependence more

strongly than extant notions of custodianship: place-based partnerships are not only of a place but are for that place—thus, caring and place are mutually constituting (Till, 2012).

Finally, an **ethics of resilience** explores how places absorb shocks or disturbances and 'bounce back', but it may also invite us to witness collective efforts undertaken in partnerships to transform places; to 'build them back better', to use a highly charged political phrase, but in a very concrete materially and culturally situated sense. A place-based ethics of resilience rejects the view that responsibility for development lies with dominant institutions. Instead, an ethics of resilience prioritises "shared ethical responsibility for actions and environment" (Käyhkö, 2021, p. 1). It embraces anything that increases the capacity of "communities [to be] less vulnerable to hazards and disasters than less resilient places" (Cutter et al., 2008, p. 601) by anticipating and preparing for crises (Muñoz et al., 2019), or recovering from shocks (Branzei & Fathallah, 2021). Beyond the original definition of "positive adaptation" to unexpected or surprising events, which implies mastery over adversity (Hermann et al., 2011 p. 259), an ethics of resilience relies on acts of plasticity by which partners remain sensitive to place.

Outcomes and Findings

From the work of the authors and special guests, the editors of this special issue conclude that CSPs can rekindle the meaning of place (Howard-Grenville et al., 2013; Peredo et al., 2018). We observe that natural and social eco-systems co-evolve with the place in which they are situated (Autio et al., 2018), and place is a critical resource that influences how ecosystems evolve (Slawinski et al., 2021; Thompson et al., 2018). The papers in the SI also demonstrate that partnerships and place are intrinsically reciprocal: the morality and materiality inherent in places repeatedly reset the reference points for partners (André et al., 2018), trigger epiphanies (Dentoni et al., 2018), shift identities (Anderson et al., 2019; Hardy et al., 2005), and redistribute capacities to act (Finch et al., 2017). Place thus becomes generative of partnerships in the most profound sense: by developing an awareness of their emplacement, CSPs commit to place, and through their place-based commitments they reflect three intertwined modalities of place-specific ethics that bind CSPs and place: an ethics of recognition, an ethics of care, and an ethics of resilience (see Fig. 1). As the papers in this SI illustrate, these ethical modalities are in equal measure "hopeful, disruptive and demanding" (Herman, 2015, p. 102), meaning that these are not easy ethics to live with. Our authors

have found vivid examples of how emplaced CSPs embody these ethics, signalling hope for the sustainability of our (always hyper-local) life-worlds. You can read the papers in this special issue by following this link: https://link.springer.com/collections/hcdjfdhbgd

SI Guest Discussants:

Barbara L. Gray, Professor Emeritus, Smeal College of Business, Pennsylvania State University, State College, USA

Thomas B. Lawrence, Professor of Strategic Management, Said Business School, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

Tim Cresswell, Ogilvie Professor of Geography at the University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, UK

Alastair Anderson (Distinguished Professor of Entrepreneurship — Deceased. Lancaster University Management School, Lancaster, UK), Sarah Jack (Jacob and Marcus Wallenberg Professor of Innovative and Sustainable Business Development, Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm, Sweden) & Ed McKeever (Entrepreneurship And Strategy, Lancaster University Management School, Lancaster, UK

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Forthcoming Research Bulletin
Title: The challenge of enforcing employee rights: the case of underpaid wages and free labour time

Author:
Dr Michelle O'Sullivan

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